

fication, to overcome my corruptions, and to enable me to live to thy praise. And, Lord, thou knowest that these desires have been earnest, and not at a mood or flash, but in a constant and settled way; and they have been industrious. Lord, thou knowest the pains that my soul hath taken, and still am willing to take. If I might but overcome such corruptions, and be enabled to walk with thee in holiness and righteousness, I care not what pains I took. And, Lord, this hath been from year to year, and I am resolved that this shall continue, and through thy grace I hope it will continue to my dying day, so as if I should perish, I would perish crying to thee for the righteousness of

thy Son, and for the righteousness of sanctification of my heart. Lord, this it is that thou hast wrought in my soul. Now, if thou canst be able thus to appeal to God, blessed art thou; blessed are those that do hunger and thirst after righteousness in this manner. But now, though in the very naming of these things, perhaps the Lord may be pleased so far to work upon some hearts as to quicken some desires after the ways of God and righteousness, yet the main thing that is to be presented to you for the quickening of your hearts, is the setting the beauty and the excellency of it before you. And so the comforting and encouraging of the soul in seeking after it.

SERMON XVIII.

OR,

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF SANCTIFICATION.

'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.'—MAT. v. 6.

THE third thing propounded in the opening of this great and weighty point of the righteousness of sanctification, or inherent righteousness, was the excellency of it. What is there in this righteousness that causes a soul thus to hunger and thirst after it? There are many things that men hunger and thirst after that are but vanity, and not worth the spending of our thoughts, much less our spirits, upon; and surely Christ would never pronounce them blessed that do so, that spend their time and their thoughts upon vanity. But there is a great excellency in this righteousness, whereby the soul is enabled to glorify God, and honour him as the infinite first being of all things. Now the excellency of this righteousness consists in these things:—

First, This righteousness is the right temper of the soul. The health of the body it consists in the well and right constitution of it. Look, as the body when it is in health can relish and taste things for sweetness and delight, and can work and agitate in the place God hath set it in; but if a man's body be dis-tempered through sickness and weakness, then he can neither work nor relish anything, nor enjoy himself in anything that he hath; and therefore it is that man desires health above all outward blessings. What is it for a rich man to have wealth and a great estate, and not to have health? What is it to a man

to have honours and preferments, to have friends, and all the delights this world can afford, whenas he doth not enjoy himself in those things? Now sin it is the distemper of the soul—that which puts the soul out of taste, and takes away the excellency of all it doth enjoy. Therefore it is so oft in Scripture compared unto things that are the most loathsome. Now when grace comes into the heart, it prevails against all the ill-humours of the soul, and brings health into the spirit; it makes the soul healthful and hale in the service of God.

Secondly, This righteousness is a spark of the divine nature. That expression we have in 2 Pet. i. 4: 'Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.' Grace and righteousness is all one, and it is nothing else but a sparkling of the divine nature that is in God himself. And the soul that understands what this is, how can it but long after it; it sees a greater glory and a more worth in the least spark of this excellency than in all the glory of the world represented unto it in the most taking and beautiful show that can be. The soul by this comes to live even as God himself doth; and is not this very desirable?

Thirdly, It is the very image of God in the soul, and an image represents a thing in the chief excel-

lency of it. As the image or picture of a man, it doth not represent the legs and the feet of the man, which are the inferior parts, but his countenance, his face. The image of a man it is represented by his face, which is the glory of the man, or the head. So God's image in us is this righteousness, inherent grace. The creatures have the footsteps of God upon them. In all the creatures that are in the world we may there behold so many footsteps of God, as it were, but not God's image. If so be that a man trod on the sand of the sea, there would not remain the image of the man, but only the footsteps. We cannot say, the man being gone, that there is the image of such a man, but there is his footsteps. So all the manifestations of God in the world, in creation and providence, they shew forth the footsteps of God, that God hath been here; all the creation holds forth the footsteps of the Most High. But when we behold a saint we see the glory of God; there we behold the face of God. As in Gen. i., where the council was called, 'Come, let us make man.' How? after our footsteps? No, but 'after our own image.' Now grace is the renewing of this glorious image; for we must know that this excellent piece of God's image by man's fall was all defaced and blurred; there was a blackness and deformity upon this glorious excellency, but now grace is a-renewing of this image again. The soul it represents God in a lively way; the image of a man in his child, it is more lively than in a piece of wood; it is possible to draw it in such an excellency and feature that it may be every way like the man, but yet not so like a man's image as is his child. Grace in the heart is the image of God lively represented. God may see himself there, as a father sees himself in the face of his child. God cannot see himself so in all the world as in a saint. If so be God would say, Where shall I behold my image? If he went to acts of providence, he might see his footsteps; if he went to works of creation, he might see his power and wisdom; but surely when he goes into the heart of a saint, there he sees his image most glorious. Surely, then, grace it is an excellent thing. The prototype of this image was in Christ without measure; he received of this grace without measure, and we from his fulness receive, even of this grace, grace for grace.

Fourthly, The excellency of this righteousness it appears in this, in that it is the very life of God himself; a man may see his image, but not his life; but now grace it is God's life. That expression hints so much unto us that we have in Eph. iv. 18, 'Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God;' intimating that when the soul comes to have this righteousness, it comes to live the life that God doth himself. How is that? the same life that is in the nature of God; the soul acting as God

acts comes to live the life of God. As when a creature shall act as God acts, and make the same end that God makes, and work towards this end as God works, this is the life of God; for God's life it consists in this, in willing himself the highest good, and acting as unto an ultimate end, and ordering all his undertakings to suit with this end. This is the excellency of God; and a saint comes to live the life of God; he propounds God to be the chiefest good, the glory of God the ultimate end of all his actions, and drives all his designs to this end. And herein consists the excellency of this life of sanctification, and thus a saint doth in his measure; though he be not able to reach up to the top and height of this glory, yet every saint in his measure doth attain this end. How desirable, then, is this righteousness, that makes the soul to live that life here which it must live, and shall to all eternity.

Fifthly, It is the very glory of God in the soul of man. The soul doth not only come to live the life of God, but it comes to be the very glory of God. Rom. iii. 23, 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' or, as it is in the original, 'deprived' of the glory of God. We are now deprived of the righteousness Adam was first made in. Adam he was stated in a glorious being in paradise, but he lost that righteousness; and in that condition he was the glory of God, being the excellentest creature that God made; but he sinning, did deface that excellency. Now when this is renewed in the soul, God's glory is come into the soul. Men desire glory in the world. What are the thoughts and the desires of all men almost after, but those things that may advance themselves and their own honour? How desirous, then, is God's glory, or ought it to be unto us; this shines in the souls of the saints; and to have a principle that we shall hold forth this glory according to the measure of grace received, this is very excellent; that a poor wretch should come to such a height of excellency to hold forth the glory of the eternal God. There is not only God shining upon the soul, but God shining in the soul that holds forth the glory of God to the world. And herein is a great mystery of the excellency of this righteousness, that it doth not only shine from God upon the soul, but there is a shining in the soul that holds forth the shine of the righteousness upon this soul to all the world.

Sixthly, By this righteousness the glory of God is maintained in the world; this is that which holds up God's honour in the world. What glory should God have in the world if all were as unrighteous as some are? You think that the saints they are little worth; let me tell you it is for their sakes that the world now stands. Had God no more honour from some than he hath from the most of you, what would become of you? It is not for your sakes the world

is continued. The world is not worthy of these excellent ones; but God doth continue these, that he might have glory from them. Saith God, I have made a world, and I have placed and filled it with variety of creatures; but of all the works of my hands, I have none that doth give me that glory that my saints do. God puts such a principle into some that they give him the glory of their being. Now, is not this a most excellent thing, and most desirable, that the creature should be able to live up to the fulfilling of the end which it was created for?

Seventhly, By this righteousness all natural and civil righteousness is raised higher and to a more glorious condition than possibly it could be before. There is no action that a man can do that hath any worth in it, any further than this righteousness is in it. Men in their natural estate they work from a natural principle; but when grace comes into the heart, this inherent righteousness, the soul works in natural actions from inward principles, and makes those righteous actions; when a gracious heart follows his calling, and the things of the world, it is in a spiritual way. Carnal hearts are carnal in spiritual things, and gracious hearts are spiritual in natural things.

Eighthly, Upon the receiving of this righteousness, every action, so far as this righteousness is in it, is more worth than heaven and earth. You who are saints, prize your parts, prize your duties. It was a speech of Luther, who extolled faith and righteousness as much as ever any did, when he met with an expression of righteousness or faith, he would be sure to carry it to exalt free grace. Yet he who was so full in the extolling of the righteousness of Christ, saith, that every good work that springs from faith is more precious to God than heaven and earth. Heaven and earth holds forth God's glory in a passive way, these in an active way. Those actions that come from this righteousness hold forth the glory of God in an active way; and one action done unto the glory of God in an active way, holds forth God's glory more eminently than all the world besides.

Ninthly, This righteousness the excellency of it consists in this, this raises the heart above all creatures and enjoyments, and carries the soul beyond them all. Before righteousness comes into the heart, the heart lies below the creature, and is a slave unto every creature. When the creature bids go, it runs; when that would be obeyed, it yields presently. But this righteousness it raises the soul above them all; so as it now comes to have God alone to be higher than itself. The soul acknowledges no supreme but God himself, and is subject unto him and him alone. The soul now knows its excellency and worth, that there is no creature fit and worthy to have converse with it; it is only a companion for God himself.

If God will have it subject, it will in order to him submit to anything; but its submission shall be only in order to him; so that the good of the creature now consists not in anything the creature can give, nor the hurt in anything the creature can do, but only in God alone. The soul is now in a kind enlarged infinitely, and can be satisfied with nothing but God; nothing but a God only can fill up the cravings of the soul. Whereas before it was satisfied with every lust, with every filthy vanity, now nothing but real enjoyments, and only that which is real, can satisfy the soul.

Tenthly, The excellency of this righteousness consists in this, that it is a principle of union and communion with God himself; the soul now comes into relation, into near union, with the Father. When God made man at first he did not only give him a body and a soul, but he put a principle of enjoying communion with him; for herein lies man's happiness, that he is made capable of enjoying communion with God. But now this happiness is lost; man by his fall is now become a stranger unto God, and when God converts the soul this is restored; at the first work of conversion the soul is made near unto God, who was before afar off. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, and now the soul comes to be fitted for communion with so high a good; for no creature is fit for communion with God but angels and men. Now there must be a suitableness of lives in those that enjoy communion; there cannot be communion where there is an unsuitableness in living. As a man cannot have communion with the beasts, because they live not the same life, and the beasts cannot have communion with the plant, because they live a contrary life, a natural man cannot have communion with God, because he lives not the same life that God doth; but a saint comes to enjoy communion with the Lord by virtue of this righteousness. Before, thou wanderest from God, and soughtest after vanity, and never knew what it was to enjoy communion with God. Communion with God, it was but a light thing to thee before; thou didst look upon it as a thing that had not much in it—it was but a notion to thee; thou didst hear of such a thing, and thou couldst relate it, but there was no worth in it to thee, thou didst not prize it; but now the soul comes to enjoy that which is more worth than a thousand worlds to it, and the more righteousness the soul hath, the more communion it hath with God. And this is the reason that the soul hungers and thirsts after more righteousness, for the more it enjoys of God the more sweetness it finds.

Eleventhly, This righteousness is that which sanctifies all our actions unto God, and puts a worth upon them; before, our actions they were not accepted, they were looked upon as filthy, polluted things:

'To the pure all things are pure, but to the defiled and polluted, all things are filthy;' so God looks upon them. Now, what is it to sanctify a thing? To sanctify, it is to set a thing apart for God. It is grace that sanctifies the soul. Whereas the soul was employed for common uses before, now it is separated for God; as when the vessels of the temple were sanctified, they were separated for holy uses, only for that use. So a godly man, he is separated for God, being taken out of the world and employed now in holy services. In Ps. iv. 5; not only separated for God by an act of God upon the soul, which hath been from all eternity—but though this be a blessedness and a high privilege to be sanctified and set apart from all eternity for God; but it is a sanctification by grace. There is that put into the soul whereby the soul is enabled to set itself apart for God, and so it comes to grow in grace more and more, and it is enabled for to make a sanctified use of all it enjoys; it can now tell how to make use of all creatures for the glory of God, whereas before, the world had the use of the soul—but now, saith the soul, I am separated only for high ends, for the glory of that God from whom I receive my being.

Twelfthly, This helps the soul to overcome the greatest evil in the world. Sin is the greatest evil, and one truly enlightened had rather suffer anything in the world than be overcome by the least sin; a gracious heart looks with more indignation upon the least sin than upon any sufferings. Now it is nothing but the Holy Ghost can overcome sin; it is the Spirit alone that can subdue iniquity. The soul it hath a principle within itself whereby it overcomes sin, and so goes on until the work be perfected; so that a gracious heart doth not only overcome sin by the help of the Spirit, but also from an inward principle that there is working in the soul against that which is contrary unto God.

Thirteenthly, The excellency of it consists in this, because Jesus Christ in it attains the end of his death; and certainly that wherein Jesus Christ attains the end of his death must needs be very precious. It is a part of the end why the Father sent Jesus Christ into the world, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives: Luke i. 74, 'Christ came into the world that he might have a people to serve him, that he might redeem a chosen generation.' Who are they? Certainly they must be some rare people that must have such a one to come to redeem them. Man had lost all his holiness and righteousness that he had at the first, and lay under filth and misery; but such was God's love to righteousness, that he saith to Christ, My Son, thou must go into the world to restore righteousness again; such is my love to righteousness that

thou must go; though thou art the only beloved of my soul, yet go thou must. Well, saith Christ, Father, I am willing to go, and though it cost me my life to procure righteousness, and righteous ones to be subjects for thy mercy to triumph in, I am willing to die to procure it. How excellent then is the righteousness, which is that in which Christ attains his end in dying!

Fourteenthly, This is the only thing, next to the righteousness of Christ, that will be of worth at death and judgment—next, I say, unto the righteousness of Jesus Christ. When all the world shall fail, their hearts shall quake within them, and all their civil righteousness, and all their formality, and their foolish pomp in the world, that which they have made their hope, the rock of their confidence and their stay, shall all sink under them, this is that which, I say, next to the righteousness of Christ, will hold up the head above water; this shall comfort thee, and then it will be desirable. Oh that we had oil in our lamps, and grace in our hearts! When the foolish virgins saw the glory the wise virgins were possessed of, they then saw their folly in their neglect, and they cried then, Oh that we had grace! oh that we had oil in our lamps! Certainly that which will be of such excellency then, it is no less worth now.

Fifteenthly, This is an immortal seed. When once the soul is insealed in righteousness, it is ever righteous; the least seed of it, it shall endure to eternity—and the lastingness of a thing, we say, puts a price upon it. If thou hast this, thou hast that in thee that all the devils in hell shall not overcome; they may assault, trouble, and disquiet thy peace, but they shall never undermine this righteousness, they shall never undo thee in that which is thy righteousness, thy happiness; and herein likewise is another excellency of this righteousness.

Sixteenthly, lastly, This righteousness is nothing else but the beginning of heaven. In that golden chain in Rom. viii. there is no mention of sanctification; sanctification is heaven begun. There is mention made of calling, of justification, of glorification, but no mention of sanctification; so that sanctification it is heaven begun; it is not only the way to heaven, but heaven itself. Now certainly this is very desirable; therefore put all these together, and we shall understand the meaning of that scripture in Prov. xii. 26, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.' He is more excellent in that he is a healthful man; more excellent in that he hath the divine nature. In that he hath the image of God. In that he lives the life of God. In that he is made partaker of exceeding great and precious promises. In that his sins are pardoned. In that he is accepted by the Father. In this the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour. It may be his neighbour is a rich man,

his landlord, his master, the best in the parish, but he a poor man, yet if godly he is better than his neighbour, though his neighbour be a lord, a prince, though he be never so great. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour; for you that hunger and thirst after this righteousness, behold what a glorious object you have here which your thirst is placed upon.

From this point abundance of comfort flows to you that can prove yourselves to be hungerers and thirsters. We see some excellency in it; oh that we might have more! Do you say so, do you desire that you might have more? then know,

First, That these hungerings of thine are better than all the world's fillings; these desires are better than all the cravings of worldlings. The worldly man saith, Who will shew us any good? and thou sayest, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance, Lord, clothe my soul with righteousness, Lord, bring me into such a condition that I may stand with boldness at the throne of thy grace. Know that thy hungerings are better than the world's fillings.

Secondly, These desires of thine, they are better than all common gifts, the greatest parts and natural endowments that the most glorious hypocrite in the world hath. Many can pray excellently, repeat largely, and thou thinkest, hadst thou their gifts and parts, how happy shouldst thou be. Thy hungerings are better than those enlargements, for they are but common workings, and no distinguishing characters; but these hungerings and thirstings after this righteousness, they are the breathings of the Spirit of God, the special workings of the Spirit.

Thirdly, This is the thing that hath been the con-

fort of the most precious saints in all the world. Those who are now at rest in the bosom of the Father, they have comforted themselves in these hungerings and thirstings. Perhaps thou canst not see the full manifestation of this in the assurance of it; neither could they; but they hungered and thirsted after this, that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon them. Look that choice scripture, and meditate upon it as thy portion; mark how Nehemiah expresses himself, 'O Lord, let thy ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and thy servants who desire to fear thy name;' as if he should say, Lord, thou knowest though there be many weaknesses in us, yet the desires of our souls are to fear thee. Comfort thyself with this scripture when thou canst not find that righteousness thou wouldst have—when thou hast sad dejected thoughts within thee that God perhaps will reject thee, make use of this scripture, 'Lord, thou knowest the desires of our souls are to fear thy name;' Lord, let me have this and I am happy; though corruption prevails over me, yet this spark is alive and in me, for which I bless thy name, I desire to fear thee. And Christ saith in the text, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.' It is very observable he doth not say, Blessed is he that *doth* thus and thus. No; but blessed is he that hungers and thirsts after righteousness. Though they are blessed that do this, yet for the comfort of weak ones this is said, Blessed are they that do desire to hunger and thirst after righteousness, blessed are they who find the want of it; and in the midst of that, the desire of their soul is to fear God. This scripture belongs to thee; comfort thyself with it as thy portion, but be sure that thy desires are right.